DAILY MAVERICK
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DEFEND TRUTH

SHIPS IN THE NIGHT

Russian vessel slips out of Simon's Town with still no official explanation

Russian cargo ship Lady R leaves Simonstown harbour.Photo:Supplied

s://www.dailymaverick.co.za/author/victoria-oregan/)
By Victoria O'Regan (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/author/victoria-oregan/)

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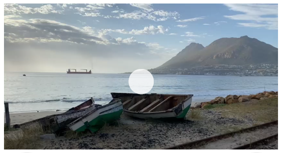
09 Dec 2022 30

By 1.43pm on Friday, Lady R had still not shown up on marine monitoring services after three nights of highly guarded activity.



0:00 / 0:11

The Russian cargo ship, Lady R was seen by a number of Simon's Town residents leaving the navy harbour at about 6.30am on Friday. Several guards were reported in the vicinity as navy tugboats arrived at 6am and guided the vessel out of the harbour.

By 8am it was heading past Cape Point.

Lady R's early departure from the Simon's Town Naval Base comes after three nights of highly guarded activity, as mysterious and – as it stands – unidentified cargo was moved on and off the ship in the presence of armed officials under the cover of darkness.

Read in Daily Maverick*: "Docking in the dark — Sanctioned Russian ship drops anchor at Simon's Town Naval Base* (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article

Russian cargo ship Lady R leaves Simonstown harbour. Photo:Supplied

Russian cargo ship Lady R leaves Simonstown harbour. Photo:Supplied

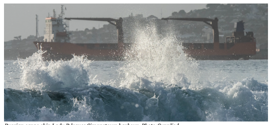
/2022-12-07-docking-in-the-dark-sanctioned-russian-ship-drops-anchor-at-simons-town-naval-base/)"

The Russian cargo ship docked between 8pm and 10pm on Tuesday. Its automatic identification system (AIS) – which provides the ship's position, identification and other information to other vessels and coastal authorities – was offline. By 1.43pm on Friday, Lady R had still not shown up on marine monitoring services – an indication that its AIS is likely to be switched off.

Read in Daily Maverick: "*Sanctioned Russian ship moves mystery cargo in Simon's Town navy dockyard under cover of night* (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-08-sanctioned-russian-ship-uploaded-mystery-cargo-in-simons-town/)"

To date there has been no official explanation from the Department of Defence (DoD), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), nor the navy for the arrival of the ship. *Daily Maverick* has repeatedly contacted the DoD, SANDF and the navy for comment, but has received no reply.

Russian cargo ship Lady R leaves Simonstown harbour. Photo:Supplied

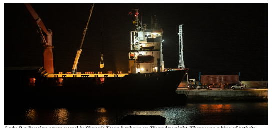


Russian cargo ship Lady R leaves Simonstown harbour. Photo:Supplied

'Unacceptable'

On Thursday, DA defence spokesperson Kobus Marais wrote to Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Thandi Modise (https://www.da.org.za/2022/12/defence-minister-must-explain-mysterious-russian-vessel-docked-at-simons-town-naval-base), asking that she explain why the US-sanctioned Russian vessel was docked at the Simon's Town naval dockyard, and why it was "shrouded in secrecy".

Marais also asked the SANDF and the navy to explain the presence of the commercial vessel which had docked in a navy port, but still had not received a reply by 11am on Friday.



Lady R a Russian cargo vessel in Simon's Town harbour on Thursday night. There was a hive of activity around the ship after 8pm on Thursday.

The silence from government officials, Marais says, is "unacceptable".

Speaking to *Daily Maverick*, Marais said that it was clear from the information he had received that the hive of activity surrounding the vessel in the past days had mainly occurred during the night.

Visit *Daily Maverick's* homepage (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/?utm_source=direct&utm_medium=in_article_link&utm_campaign=homepage) for more news, analysis and investigations

Several Simon's Town residents observed and photographed cranes moving at least six containers between trucks and the Lady R at the naval dockyard quayside from just before midnight on Thursday, *Daily Maverick* reported.

"Trucks were parked at a local sports ground during the day, and were heavily armed and guarded," he said.

Marais said there is "clearly there's an involvement of Armscor" – the arms procurement agency of the Department of Defence. The information he had received was that Armscor was involved in contracting the truckers to transport the cargo.

David S Feldmann, spokesperson for the US embassy in Pretoria, told *Daily Maverick* (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-08-sanctioned-russian-ship-uploaded-mystery-cargo-in-simons-town/) that since 8 May 2022, Lady R and its parent company, Transmorflot LLC, had been subject to US economic sanctions (https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20220508).

"We had previously advised the South African government that the Lady R was planning to stop in South Africa," he said on Thursday.

"We had indicated the vessel was sanctioned under US law because the ship is part of Russia's military export-import business and had cautioned that entities supporting the vessel could run afoul of US sanctions," he added.

Feldmann wouldn't divulge further details about when the embassy had communicated with South Africa about the planned arrival of the 2004 Ro-Ro (roll-on/roll-off) Russian cargo ship. **DM**

(https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymaverick.co.za%2Farticle%2F2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation%2F%3Futm_source...
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All Comments 30

Gavin Brown 9 December 2022 at 16:01 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6696180)
There goes US assistance for us through AGOA ?

> *Michael Clark* 9 December 2022 at 20:06 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6698242)
> I sincerely hope so!

> *Matsobane Monama* 10 December 2022 at 01:49 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6699467)
> It's NOT a one way street. They are not doing us a favor.
>
> > *Johan Buys* 10 December 2022 at 15:51 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6703908)
> > So by your logic we will be better off without AGOA or the billions of cheap energy transformation finance? Perhaps the State should be the central seller of SA agriculture and swap that for cheap Russian oil.
> >
> > > *Matsobane Monama* 11 December 2022 at 17:26 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6711880)
> > > Johan, what you are saying is, we just accept the BENEFITS and shut up. DON'T we hv to question their immorality, hypocrisy, cruelty, aggression towards what they call skunk nations (e.g China), France's continuing Colonial agenda (ltalin prime Minister
> > > challenged France to free those West African Nations), destruction of the environment(Amazon, forests in South East Asia, Niger Delta), propping up Dictators overtly n covertly in Developing Nations, Economic hitmen and recently legislation to punish AFRICA for a NEUTRAL stand in Ukraine. Europe n US are the biggest polluters historical ly and NOW after China and India, Germans are failing to power their modern economy with renewables and yet they want to experiment with us (Decarbisation). War is coming in the South China Sea and weapons are pouring into TAIWAN. QUITE.
> > >
> > > > *SAM VAN WYK* 12 December 2022 at 11:53 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6716301)
> > > > it is actually a one way street. what do we offer the US in return? corruption and assistance to their enemies! not very clever at all!

Paul T 9 December 2022 at 16:25 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-

explanation/#comment-6696402)
2 gangster states just touching base, that's all.

Johann Olivier 9 December 2022 at 16:30 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6696442)
It is to be hoped that the US, the EU and Ukraine recognise, finally, what side South Africa is on and takes dramatic steps to get the attention of the corrupt-to-its-core ANC. Surely, they can sanction individuals without sanctioning and harming the country. I feel comfortable that most South Africans are appalled by Russia's actions and should not face the wrath of the international community. But the ANC? Sanction them.

> *annefelgate* 9 December 2022 at 21:16 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6698714)
> Absolutely agree

> *Matsobane Monama* 10 December 2022 at 01:57 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6699478)
> Johanna we are safe bcos they wouldn't DARE harm their own, there's a big population of descendents of Europeans in this Country. That's what they ONLY care about.

> *Matsobane Monama* 10 December 2022 at 01:57 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6699479)
> Johanna we are safe bcos they wouldn't DARE harm their own, there's a big population of descendents of Europeans in this Country. That's what they ONLY care about.

>> *Dermot Molloy* 10 December 2022 at 10:46 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6701555)
>> Matsobane, if that's only what they care about then why did the US & many European countries impose sanctions on South Africa pre Democracy?

>>> *Matsobane Monama* 10 December 2022 at 20:20 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6705694)
>>> Scandinavian Countries, A BIG YES and they are still doing it today. Margaret Thatcher n Ronald Reagan vehemently opposed Sanctions vs SA. Why ? Gold. DESTROY and send in US AID. They hv beaten the whole world into submission. Iraq n Libyan wars unprovoked and unforgivable
>>> Do we need NATO? Read a well researched Book by British Australian journalist John Pilger: The Coming War On CHINA. 3 yrs later another War is coming. What is happening in Ukraine is tragic but we don't want to be dragged into NATO'S threat on Russia.

>>> *Matsobane Monama* 11 December 2022 at 17:30 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6711903)
>>> Dermot i responded to your comment, i don't know what happened

>> *Russ H* 10 December 2022 at 11:35 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6702002)
>> You do not understand basic economics 101 nor who our real friends are !

>> *Russ H* 10 December 2022 at 11:40 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6702032)
>> Perhaps read up on AGOA and what US Aid has done for South Africa. Then perhaps look at the trade that SA does with the US and Europe. The see what economy activity we have with Russia…virtually zilch!

>>> *Matsobane Monama* 10 December 2022 at 21:07 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6705897)
>>> Russ, I know the benefits AGOA is bringing to African Nations. If they came up with it for the GOOD OF HUMANITY, i am OK with it.
>>> We are not children, it's also used as a TOOL for Africa to toe the line. Obama AGGRESSIVELY threatened to cut us off over Chicken portions. This is not simple Economics. Left alone by external interference AFRICA SHALL RISE. There's a wind of change blowing across the entire Continent, young people taking on old, puppet and corrupt leadership.

>>>> *Mark Schaufelbuehl* 11 December 2022 at 19:32 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6712517)
>>>> Then why are so many Africans eager to get to Europe …. you're dreaming and out of touch, unfortunately. We old-timers have come to see that Madiba's ideals have flopped….. But agreed left alone Africa….. oooops… I'd be careful trusting our/your Russian & Chinese friends.

Richard Bryant 9 December 2022 at 19:15 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6697877)

Pretty easy actually. Place the whole ANC NEC on the UN sanctions list until they disclose what was on the ship. Freeze their offshore assets. Let them travel to Russia and other rogue states only.

> *Angus Auchterlonie* 10 December 2022 at 23:05 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6706320)
> Damn good idea 👍

Michael Clark 9 December 2022 at 20:03 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6698241)
In 2016, USAID's total foreign assistance to South Africa amounted to US$459.7-million, I would encourage the USA to withdraw all financial support after we gave a giant middle finger and suggest they cancel AGOA!

> *Mark Schaufelbuehl* 11 December 2022 at 19:34 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6712540)
> agreed….. SA always out to scrounge. Despicable!

Allan Wolman Wolman 10 December 2022 at 08:13 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6700524)
Not long ago Defence minister Thandi Modise visited Russia a little while later DED Mabusa also visited Russian on a 'private|' visit according to reports. Now this ship with questions about berthing in Simonstown – where are SARS and Customs as either loading or off loading was taken place. Also nobody asking questions about Modise.s or the tow visits by Mabusa – and how did the travel? in SA Air Force private Jets and at who's expense?? Questions but no answers???? Wake up media and opposition parties!!

Hiram C Potts 10 December 2022 at 08:47 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6700719)
This is absolutely infuriating! I fully agree with other commenters here, it's simple, impose sanctions on these corrupt, rotten, useless gangsters masquerading as a govt.

A lethal combination of arrogance, greed & stupidity of the highest order.

Geoff Hainebach Hainebach 10 December 2022 at 10:48 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6701570)
It's highly likely that the load taken on board the Lady R was artillery ammunition for Russia's war in Ukraine. The US Navy should intercept the ship if it is on the embargo list. It is still locatable by aircraft even if the AIS is turned off. Decent South Africans surely don't want our country to be part of killing innocent Ukrainians.

Jon Quirk 10 December 2022 at 12:11 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6702373)
Exactly WHO is running South Africa at the moment?

It is simply staggering that the entire cabinet seems to have gone AWOL.

> *Angus Auchterlonie* 10 December 2022 at 23:08 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6706321)
> Operationally, intellectually and morally, they've generally been AWOL since 1994!

Cunningham Ngcukana 11 December 2022 at 10:55 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6708781)
The reckless conduct of the ANC regime with regard to Russia does not come without consequences. The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not a laughing matter or some joke. The European countries are paying a price in terms of their economies and pressures on their political institutions and systems the war is placing on them. Not only it is the cost internally but in the defence and economic assistance to the Ukraine and its people. This includes the refugee problem that many EU countries have to contend with. The fact that the thug in Moscow has unleashed murderer, serial killers and rapists, paedophiles, bank robbers, drug peddlers and lords, burglars, human traffickers and petty criminals raises question about the moral compass of the ANC and tells us why corruption and criminality is its mantra. The lives of working people, children and women that have been turned upside down by the Russian aggression is what decent human being would consider first rather than fudge issues. It is a defining measure of the type of leadership ANC has. Lindiwe Sisulu an ANC thug even gloats on the blood of the lives of the children of Ukraine. It is up to the electorate to deal with these elements who are indifferent to human suffering imposed by Putin including destruction of infrastructure that the ANC here has allowed to deteriorate for sewage to flow into beaches.

Cunningham Ngcukana 11 December 2022 at 10:56 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6708791)
I did and apparently there is censorship!

SAM VAN WYK 12 December 2022 at 11:51 (https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-12-09-mystery-russian-ship-leaves-simons-town-still-no-official-explanation/#comment-6716247)
IF US ASSISTANCE IS WITHDRAWN, WE HAVE TO THANK YOU ANC AGAIN FOR THE MESS

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